THE

NATURE and DESIGN

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

Extracted from a late AUTHOR.

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THE NATURE and DESIGN OF CHRISTIANITY.

I. THE wiſdom of mankind has for ſeveral ages been enquiring into the nature of man, and the nature of the world in which he is placed.

The wants and miſeries of human nature, and the vanity of worldly enjoyments, have made it difficult for the wiſeſt men to tell, what human happineſs was, or wherein it conſiſted.

It has pleaſed the infinite goodneſs of God to ſatisfy our enquiries, by a revelation made to the world by his ſon Jeſus Chriſt.

This revelation has laid open the great ſecrets of providence from the creation of the world. It has explained the preſent ſtate of things, and given man all the information that is neceſſary, both to give him reſt here, and to lead him ſafely to everlaſting happineſs.

It is now only neceſſary that the poor wiſdom of man do not exalt itſelf againſt God, that we ſuffer our eyes to be opened by him that made them, and our lives to be conducted by him, in whom *we live move, and have our being.*

II. As happineſs is the ſole end of all our labours, ſo this revelation aims at nothing elſe.

It gives us right notions of ourſelves, of our true good and real evil; it ſhews us our true condition, both our greatneſs and meanneſs, our happineſs and miſery.

Before this, man was a mere riddle to himſelf, and his condition full of darkneſs and perplexity; a reſtleſs inhabitant of a miſerable diſorder'd world, *walking in a vain ſhadow, and diſquieting himſelf in vain.*

But this light has diſperſed the anxiety of his vain conjectures, It has brought us acquainted with God; and, by adding heaven to earth, and eternity to time, has opened ſuch a glorious view of things, as leads

men, even in this world, to a *peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding*.

III. This revelation acquaints us, that we have a ſpirit within us, which was created after the divine image; that this ſpirit is now in a fallen condition; that the body in which it is placed is its ſepulchre, where it is enſlaved to fleſhly thoughts, blinded with falſe notions of good and evil, and dead to all taſte of its true happineſs.

It teaches us, that this world in which we live, is alſo in a diſorder'd irregular ſtate, and curſed for the ſake of man; that it is no longer the paradiſe that God made it, but the remains of a drowned world, full of marks of God's diſpleaſure, and the ſin of its inhabitants.

That it is a mere wilderneſs, a ſtate of darkneſs, a vale of miſery; where vice and madneſs, dreams and ſhadows, variouſly pleaſe and torment the ſhort miſerable lives of men.

Devils alſo, and evil ſpirits have here their reſidence, promoting the works of darkneſs, and wandering up and down ſeeking whom they may devour.

So that man, in his natural ſtate, is like a perſon ſick of variety of diſeaſes, knowing neither his diſtempers nor his cure, and incloſed in a place where he can hear, or ſee, or feel, or taſte of nothing but what tends to enflame his diſorders.

IV. But Chriſtianity puts an end to this ſtate of things, blots out all the ideas of worldly wiſdom, brings the world itſelf to aſhes, and creates all anew. It calls man from an animal life, and earthly ſocieties, to be born again of the Holy Ghoſt, and be made a member of the kingdom of God.

It cruſhes into nothing the concerns of this life, condemns it as a ſtate of vanity and darkneſs, and leads man to happineſs with God in the realms of light.

It propoſes the purifying of our ſouls, enliven'd with the divine ſpirit; It ſets before us new goods and evils, and forms us to a glorious participation of the divine nature.

This is the one end of Chriſtianity. It does not leave us to grovel on in the deſires of the fleſh, to caſt about for worldly happineſs, and wander in darkneſs

and exile from God: but the ſole deſign of it is, to lead us from all thoughts of reſt here, to ſeparate us from worldly tempers, to deliver us from the folly of our paſſions, the ſlavery of our own natures, the power of evil ſpirits, and unite us to God, the true fountain of real good. This is the mighty change which Chriſtianity aims at: to reform our whole natures, renew our ſouls in the image of God, and make them the inhabitants of heavenly and immortal bodies.

V. The manner in which it changes our whole ſtate is equally great and wonderful.

I am the way, the truth, and the life, ſaith our bleſſed Lord, *no man cometh to the father but by me.*

As all things were created by the ſon of God, and *without him was not any thing made that was made*, ſo are all things redeemed and reſtored by the ſame divine perſon.

As nothing could come into being without him, ſo nothing can enter into a ſtate of happineſs but by him.

The dignity of this redemption at once confounds the pride, and relieves the miſery of man. How fallen muſt he be from God, that ſhould need ſo great a mediator! And, on the other hand, how full of comfort is the thought that ſo high a method, ſo ſtupendous a means, ſhould be taken to reſtore him to a ſtate of peace and favour with God.

VI. This is the true point of view, in which every Chriſtian is to behold himſelf. He is to overlook the poor projects of this life, and conſider himſelf as a creature, through his natural corruption, fallen into a ſtate of endleſs miſery; but by the mercy of God, redeem'd to a condition of everlaſting happineſs.

All the precepts and doctrines of the Goſpel are founded on theſe two great truths, the deplorable corruption of human nature, and its new birth in Chriſt Jeſus.

The one includes all the miſery, the other all the happineſs of man.

It is on theſe, that the whole frame of Chriſtianity is built; forbidding only ſuch things as faſten us to the diſorders of ſin, and commanding only thoſe duties which lead us into the liberty of the ſons of God.

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So that if we think and act as Chriſtians, we act ſuitably to theſe terms of our condition, fearing and avoiding all the motions of our corrupted nature, cheriſhing the ſecret inſpirations of the Holy ſpirit, opening our minds for the reception of the divine light, and preſſing after all the perfections of our new birth.

All Chriſtians are continually to behave themſelves conformable to this double capacity. We are to fear, and watch, and pray, like men that are always on the brink of eternal death; and to believe, and hope, labour, and aſpire, like Chriſtians that are called to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life.

VII. This knowledge of ourſelves makes human life a ſtate of infinite importance, placed upon ſo dreadful a point betwixt two ſuch eternities.

Well might our Saviour ſay to one that begg'd firſt to go and bury his Father, *follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.*

For what is all the buſtle and hurry of the world but a dead ſhow, and its greateſt actors but dead men, when compared with that real life to which the followers of Chriſt are redeem'd.

Had we been made only for this world, worldly wiſdom had been our higheſt wiſdom: but ſeeing we are redeem'd to an entirely contrary ſtate, worldly wiſdom is now our greateſt fooliſhneſs.

It is now our only wiſdom, to underſtand our new ſtate, and conduct ourſelves by the principles of our redemption.

VIII. The nature of our Chriſtian calling is of that concern, as to deſerve all our thoughts; and is indeed only to be perceived by great ſerioufneſs and attention of mind.

The Chriſtian ſtate is an inviſible life in the Spirit of God, ſupported not by ſenſible goods, but the ſpiritual graces of faith and hope: ſo that man, buſied in earthly cares and enjoyments, perceives nothing of this great and heavenly calling.

The changes which Chriſtianity maketh in the preſent ſtate of things, are all inviſible: Its goods and evils which are the only true ſtandards of our actions, are not ſubject to the knowledge of our ſenſes.

In God *we live, and move, and have our being;* but how unſeen, how unſelt is all this!

Chriſt *is the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world, the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all things. The whole creation ſubſiſts in him and by him. No perſon is in any favour with God, but by this great mediator. But how inviſible, how unknown to all our ſenſes is this ſtate of things!

Chriſtians are temples of the Holy Ghoſt, conſecrated to God, members of Chriſt's myſtical body, of his fleſh and his bones, receiving life, ſpirit, and motion from him their head.

But our ſenſes ſee no farther than our parents and kindred according to the fleſh, and fix our hearts to earthly friendſhips and relations. Well then may this life be deem'd a ſtate of darkneſs, ſince it thus clouds and covers all the true appearances of things, and keeps our minds inſenſible and unaffected with matters of ſuch infinite moment.

IX. Wou'd we therefore know our true condition, we muſt ſearch after *a life that is hid with* Chriſt *in* God. We muſt conſider ourſelves as parts of Chriſt's myſtical body, and as members of the kingdom of heaven. In vain do we conſider the beauty and ſtrength of our bodies, our alliances with men, and the diſtinctions of this world; for theſe things no more conſtitute the ſtate of human life, than rich *coffins* or beautiful *monuments* conſtitute the ſtate of the dead.

We juſtly pity the laſt poor effects of human greatneſs, when we ſee a breathleſs carcaſe lying in ſtate. It appears ſo far from any real honour, that it rather looks like ridiculing the miſery of our nature. But were religion to form our judgments, the life of a proud voluptuous ſenſual man, tho' ſhining in all the ſplendor of the world, would give us no higher an idea of human dignity, than a poor corpſe laid in ſtate.

For a ſinner, when glorying in the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life, is a more ſhocking ſight of miſery ridicul'd, than any pageantry that can expoſe the dead.

X. We have an Apoſtle's authority to ſay, that *he who liveth in pleaſure is dead while he liveth.*

This ſhews us that when we enquire what our life is, we muſt think of ſomething higher than the vigour of our blood, the gaiety of our ſpirits, or the enjoyment of ſenſual pleaſures; ſince theſe, tho' the allow'd ſigns of living men, are often undeniable proofs of dead Chriſtians.

When therefore we would truly know what our life or happineſs is, we muſt look at nothing that is ſenſible or temporal. We may as well dig in the earth for wiſdom, as look at fleſh and blood to ſee what we are, or at worldly enjoyments to find what we want, or at temporal evils, to ſee what we have to fear.

Our bleſſed Saviour put an abſolute end to all enquiries of this kind, when he ſaid, *be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.*

Here our bodies, and all bodily enjoyments, are at one daſh ſtruck out of the account of happineſs, and the preſent ſtate of things made ſo very low and inſignificant, that he who can only deprive us of them, has not power enough to deſerve our fear.

We muſt therefore, if we would conceive our true ſtate, our real good and evil, look farther than theſe dim eyes of fleſh can carry our views. We muſt, with the eyes of faith, penetrate into the inviſible world, the world of ſpirits, and conſider our order and condition among them; a world, which as St. *John* ſpeaks, *hath no need of the ſun, neither of the moon, to ſhine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb, is the light thereof.* For it is there, among eternal beings, that we muſt take eternal fellowſhip, or fall into a kingdom of darkneſs and everlaſting miſery.

XI. Chriſtianity is ſo noble in its ends, ſo extenſive in its views, that it has no leſs ſubjects than theſe to entertain our thoughts.

It buries our bodies, burns the preſent world, triumphs over death by a general reſurrection, and opens all into an eternal ſtate.

It never conſiders us in any other reſpect than as fallen ſpirits; it diſregards worldly diſtinctions, and propoſes nothing to our fears but eternal miſery, nothing to our hopes but endleſs enjoyment with God.

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This is the great, the important condition, in which Chriſtianity has placed us, above our bodies, above the world, above death, to be preſent at the diſſolution of all things, to ſee the earth in flames, and the heavens wrapt up like a ſcroll, to ſtand at the general reſurrection to appear at the univerſal judgment, and to live for ever, when all that our eyes have ſeen is paſſed away and gone.

XII. Take therefore upon thee a temper ſuitable to this greatneſs of thy condition. Remember that thou art an eternal ſpirit, that thou art but for a few months or years in a ſtate of fleſh and blood, only to try, whether thou ſhalt be for ever happy with God, or for ever miſerable with the devil.

Thou wilt hear of other concerns, and other greatneſs in the world. Thou wilt ſee every order of men, every family, every perſon, purſuing ſome fancied happineſs, as if the world had not only happineſs, but a particular kind of happineſs for all its inhabitants.

But when thou ſeeſt this, fancy thou ſaweſt all the world aſleep; the prince no longer a prince; the beggar no longer begging, but every man ſleeping out of his proper ſtate; ſome happy, others tormented, and all changing their condition, as faſt as one fooliſh dream could ſucceed another.

When thou haſt ſeen this, if thou wilt, thou mayſt go to ſleep too, thou mayſt lie down and dream. And this is all: for be as happy as the world can make thee, all is but ſleeping and dreaming: and what is ſtill worſe, it is like ſleeping in a ſhip, when thou ſhouldſt be pumping for life; or dreaming thou art a prince, when thou ſhouldſt be redeeming thyſelf from ſlavery.

XIII. This is no imaginary flight of a melancholy fancy, but the real nature of things.

For, if thou art that immortal nature, that fallen ſpirit, which religion teaches us: if thou art to meet death, reſurrection, and judgment, as the forerunners of an eternal ſtate; what are the little flaſhes of pleaſure, the changing appearances of worldly happineſs, but ſo many ſorts of dreams?

How canſt thou talk of the advantages of fortune, the pleaſures of food or apparel, without being in a dream?

Is the *beggar* aſleep, when he fancies he is building

himſelf fine houſes? is the *priſoner* in a dream, when he imagines himſelf in open fields and fine groves? and canſt thou think thy immortal ſpirit is awake, while it is delighting itſelf in the ſhadows and bubbles of worldly happineſs?

For, if it be true that man is upon his trial; if the trial is for eternity; if life is but a vapour; what is there that deſerves a ſerious thought, but how to get well out of the world, and make it a right paſſage to our eternal ſtate?

XIV. It is the manner of ſome countries, in the burial of their dead, to put a ſtaff, and ſhoes, and money in the ſepulchre along with the corps.

We ſee the folly and ignorance of ſuch a poor contrivance to aſſiſt the dead: but if we did but underſtand what is life, we ſhould ſee as much folly in the poor contrivances to aſſiſt the living.

For how many things do people labour after, break their reſt and peace to get, which yet when gotten are of juſt as much real uſe to them, as a ſtaff and ſhoes to a corpſe under ground? they are always adding ſomething to their life, which is only like adding another pair of ſhoes to a body in the grave.

Thou mayſt hire more ſervants, new paint thy rooms, and put on richer apparel; and theſe will help thee to be happy, as *golden* ſtaffs, or *painted* ſhoes, will help a dead man to walk.

XV. If thou remembereſt, that the whole race of mankind are a race of fallen ſpirits, that paſſeth through this world as an arrow paſſeth through the air: thou wilt ſoon perceive, that there is no wiſdom or happineſs but in getting away to the beſt advantage.

If thou remembereſt, that this life is but a vapour; that thou art in the body, only to be holy, humble and heavenly-minded; that thou ſtandeſt upon the brink of death, reſurrection, and judgment; and that theſe great things will ſuddenly come upon thee like a thief in the night, thou wiltſee a vanity in the things of this world, greater than any words can expreſs.

Do but therefore know thyſelf as religion hath made thee known; do but ſee thyſelf in the light which Chriſt has brought into the world, and then thou

thou wilt ſee that nothing concerns thee, but what concerns an everlaſting ſpirit that is going to God; and that there are no enjoyments here that are worth a thought but ſuch as may adorn thee with that holineſs without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord.

XVI. This is the end of Chriſtianity. It is not a ſchool for the teaching of moral virtue. It is deeper and more divine in its deſigns: It implies an entire change of heart, a full dedication of ourſelves, our ſouls and bodies unto God.

Our bleſſed Saviour came into the world, not to make any compoſition with it, but to put an end to the deſigns of fleſh and blood: and to ſhew us, we muſt either renounce the world to become ſons of God, or by enjoying it take our portion among damned ſpirits.

Chriſtianity is a ſtate of things that wholly regards eternity: It knows of no other goods and evils but ſuch as relate to another life.

It is a kingdom of heaven that has no other intereſts in this world, than as it takes its members out of it: and when the number of the elect is complete, this world will be conſumed with fire, as having no other reaſon for its exiſtence, than the furniſhing members for that bleſſed ſociety, which is to laſt for ever.

I cannot here omit obſerving the folly of human wiſdom, which, full of imaginary projects, pleaſes itſelf with its laſting eſtabliſhments in a world doomed to deſtruction, and which is to laſt no longer than till a ſufficient number is redeemed out of it.

Did we ſee a number of animals haſtening to take up their apartments, and contending for the beſt places in a building that was to be beat down as ſoon as its old inhabitants had got ſafe out, we ſhould ſee a contention full as wiſe as the wiſdom of worldly ambition.

XVII. That Chriſtianity requires a change of nature, is plain from the whole tenor of the goſpel.

The ſaviour of the world ſaith, *that except a man be born again of water and of the ſpirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* We are told, that *to as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the ſons of God; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Theſe words plainly teach us, that Chriſtianity implies an entire change of nature, that as our birth was to us the beginning of a new life, and brought us into a ſociety of earthly enjoyments, ſo Chriſtianity is another birth, that brings us into a condition altogether as new as when we firſt ſaw the light.

We begin again to be, we enter upon freſh terms of life, have new tempers, new hopes, and fears, and an entire change of every thing that can be called good or evil.

This new birth is the very eſſence and ſoul of Chriſtianity; it is the ſeal of the promiſes, the mark of our ſonſhip, the earneſt of our inheritance, and the ſure proof of our acceptance with God.

XVIII. If we would know, what a change our new life in Chriſt implies, let us conſider what it is to be born of God.

Whoſoever is born of God, ſaith the Apoſtle, *doth not commit ſin For his ſeed remaineth in him; and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of* God. *In this the children of* God *are manifeſt, and the children of the devil.* And again, *we know that whoſoever is born of* God *ſinneth not, but he that is begotten of* God *keepeth himſelf, and the wicked one toucheth him not,* 1 John iii. 10. v. 18.

The ſame Apoſtle tells us, *whoſoever is born of* God, *overcometh the world.* He overcometh all worldly deſires and worldly fears. He is crucified unto the world, and the world crucified unto him. He is dead to the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life. And he fear eth not them that can kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.

We muſt therefore examine into the ſtate of our minds, and ſee whether we are thus changed in our natures, thus born again: whether we are ſo ſpiritual as to have overcome the world; ſo holy, as that we cannot commit ſin; ſince it is the undeniable doctrine of ſcripture, that the new birth is as neceſſary to ſalvation, as the believing in Jeſus Chriſt.

XIX. We have ſeen two marks of thoſe that are born of God. A third is given us by Chriſt himſelf. *Love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you*

and

and perſecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.

Well may a Chriſtian be ſaid to be *a new Creature*, ſince without ſuch a diſpoſition as this, we cannot be Chriſtians, or children of our father, which is in heaven. It is not enough therefore to love our friends, benefactors and relations; but if we are born of God, we love like God: we have an univerſal love, a tenderneſs for all mankind, imitating that love which would that *all men ſhould be ſaved.*

God *is love: and as he who dwelleth in love dwelleth in* God, ſo he that dwelleth not in love dwelleth not in God.

It is impoſſible to be a true Chriſtian, and an enemy at the ſame time.

Mankind hath no enemy but the devil, and thoſe who are of the ſame ſpirit.

XX. There is perhaps no duty more contrary to fleſh and blood than this; but it is eaſy to thoſe that are born of God.

For, take but away earthly goods and evils, and you take away all hatred and malice; for they are the only cauſes of thoſe baſe tempers.

Let us here awhile contemplate the height and depth of Chriſtian holineſs, and that god-like ſpirit which it implies! and this alone might convince us, that to be Chriſtians, we muſt be born again: we muſt ſo change our very natures, as to have no deſire in our ſouls, but that of being like God,

And till we rejoice and delight only in God, we cannot have this love to our fellow-creatures.

We may therefore learn from this, as well as from what was obſerv'd before, that Chriſtianity does not conſiſt in doing no harm, nor in doing good, (as it is called) nor yet in any particular moral virtues, as ſome idly ſuppoſe; but in an entire change of our hearts, of all our natural tempers, and a life wholly devoted to God.

XXI. The ſame doctrine is farther taught by our bleſſed Saviour, when ſpeaking of little children, he ſaith, *ſuffer them to come unto me; for of ſuch is the kingdom of* God, Luke xviii. 16.

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If we are not reſolved to deceive ourſelves, if we have not eyes that ſee not, and ears that hear not, we muſt perceive that theſe words imply ſome mighty change in our nature.

Now the peculiar condition of infants is ſuch, that they have every thing to learn; they are to be taught by others, what they are to hope and fear, and wherein their proper happineſs conſiſts.

And in this ſenſe firſt, are we to become as little children: to be as tho' we had every thing to learn, and ſuffer ourſelves to be taught, what we are to chuſe, and what we are to avoid: to pretend to no wiſdom of our own, but be ready to be taught of God, the only way of purſuing that only happineſs, which God in Chriſt propoſes to us; and to accept it with ſuch ſimplicity of mind as little children who have nothing of their own to oppoſe it.

XXII. But now, is this infant temper thus eſſential to Chriſtianity? does the kingdom of God conſiſt only of thoſe that have it? this then is another undeniable proof that Chriſtianity implies a *new creature*: ſuch as having renounced the prejudices of life, the maxims of human wiſdom, gives itſelf with a childlike ſubmiſſion and ſimplicity, to be entirely govern'd by the doctrines and ſpirit of Chriſt. Craft and policy, ſelfiſh cunning, proud abilities and vain endowments, have no admittance in this holy ſtate of ſociety with Chriſt in God. The wiſdom of this world, the intrigues of life, the deſigns of greatneſs and ambition, lead to another kingdom. He that follows Chriſt muſt be emptied of this vain furniture, and put on the meek ornament of infant and undeſigning ſimplicity.

Where is the wiſe? where is the ſcribe? where is the diſputer of this world? hath not God made fooliſh the wiſdom of this world?

If we will partake of the wiſdom of God, we muſt judge of this world, and its moſt boaſted gifts, as the wiſdom of God judgeth of them; we muſt deem them fooliſhneſs, and with undivided hearts labour after one wiſdom, one happineſs, in being entirely devoted to God.

XXIII. From all theſe conſiderations it appears,

that Chriſtianity implies a *new nature*, and a life entirely devoted to God.

Now if this be Chriſtianity, it may ſerve to inſtruct two ſorts of people:

Firſt, thoſe who are content with an outward religion; thoſe whoſe Chriſtianity lies only in an outward decency and regularity of life.

I don't mean thoſe that are inſincere or hypocritical: but all thoſe who are content with outward religion; all who are content with any thing ſhort of that inward holineſs, the newneſs of heart and ſpirit which the Goſpel deſcribes.

They ſhould conſider that charity, chaſtity, ſobriety and juſtice, may be practiſed without Chriſtianity. A jew, a heathen, may be (what you call) charitable and temperate: but to make theſe parts of Chriſtianity, they muſt proceed from a heart truly turned to God, that is full of infant ſimplicity, that is crucified with Chriſt, that is born again of the ſpirit, that has overcome the world. Temperance or juſtice without this turn of heart, may be the temperance of a Jew or a Heathen: but it is not Chriſtian temperance or juſtice, till it proceeds from a Chriſtian ſpirit. Could we do and ſuffer all that Chriſt himſelf did and ſuffered, yet if it was not all done in the ſame temper, in the ſpirit of Chriſt, it would profit us nothing.

XXIV. A Chriſtian is ſober, charitable and juſt upon the ſame principles, and with the ſame ſpirit that he receives the Holy communion, as acts of obedience to God, and ſo many inſtances of a heart truly devoted to God.

A Chriſtian is ſober, not only ſo far as ſuits with a regular life, but ſo as becomes one who is born of the Holy ſpirit, that is one with Chriſt, who dwelleth in God and God in him.

He is charitable, not only ſo far as ſuits with his natural temper, and with a good eſteem among men; but in ſuch a meaſure as is ſuitable to the doctrine and ſpirit of the Goſpel.

For indeed, neither charity, nor temperence, nor juſtice, nor any other virtues (as they are called) are parts of Chriſtian holineſs, till they ſpring from holineſs of heart, from the mind that was in Chriſt.

This is what cannot be too much considered by those whose religion has made no change in their hearts; who fancy themselves Christians, only because of the regularity of their lives, altho' they have never experienced a renewal in the spirit of their minds, after the image of him that created them; who pray without devotion, give alms without charity, and are Christians without the spirit of Christianity.

XXVI. Secondly, this doctrine may serve to instruct those who are convinced, they have been hitherto strangers to religion.

Some people, who are asham'd of their past lives, and begin to look toward religion, think they have done enough, when they have reform'd the outward course of their lives, when they have left off their gross vices and follies, or are grown careful of some particular duties or virtues.

Thus, a man who has been a drunkard many years, thinks he has made a sufficient change by becoming temperate: another imagines he is in a very good and safe state, because he does not neglect the public worship, as he used to do: a lady fancies she lives enough to God, because she has left off plays, and lives more at home than formerly.

But such people should consider, that Christianity does not consist in the fewness of our vices; no nor in any one particular virtue, nor yet in the outward amendment of our lives: but in such a thorough change of heart, as makes the love of God the spring, and measure, and rule, of all our tempers and actions.

XXVII. It is a miserable error, to think we are Christians, because we are less vain or covetous, more sober or decent in our behaviour than we used to be. Yet this is the case with many, who think they are well, because they are not so bad as they were; because they are reform'd from outward wickedness; not considering how thorough a change, how entire a reformation of heart as well as life, Christianity implies.

But let such people remember, that they who thus measure *themselves by themselves are not wise*. Let them remember that they are not disciples of Christ, 'till they have, like him, *offered their whole soul and body as a*

reasonable

reaſonable, living ſacrifice to God; that they are not members of Chriſt's myſtical body, 'till they are united unto him by a *new ſpirit*; that they have not entered into the kingdom of God, 'till they have entered into an *infant ſimplicity* of heart, 'till they are ſo born of God as *not to commit ſin*; ſo full of an heavenly ſpirit as to have *overcome the world.*

Let them remember, *he that is in Chriſt is a new creature*, and that nothing ſhort of this will avail before God; nothing leſs than the entire renewal of the ſoul in righteouſneſs and all true holineſs. Let them remember, that there is no religion that will ſtand us in any ſtead, but that which is the converſion of the heart to God; when all our tempers are holy, heavenly, divine, ſpringing from a ſoul that is *born again* of the ſpirit, that is full of divine love, and tends with one full bent to perfection and happineſs in the enjoyment of God.

XXVIII. Therefore let us look carefully to ourſelves, and conſider what manner of ſpirit we are of: Let us not think our condition ſafe, becauſe we are of this or that church or perſuaſion, or becauſe we are ſtrict obſervers of the outward offices of religion. For we cannot but ſee, theſe are marks that belong to more than belong to Chriſt. All are not his, that *propheſy*, or even *caſt out devils, and work miracles in his name.* Much leſs thoſe who with corrupt minds and worldly hearts, are only *baptized in his name.*

If religion has raiſed us into a *new world*; if it has filled us with *new ends* of life; if it has taken poſſeſſion of our hearts, alter'd the whole turn of our minds, and changed the whole ſtream of our affections; if it has given us *new joys and griefs, new hopes and fears*; if *all things* in us *are become new*; *if the love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghoſt given unto us*, and this *ſpirit beareth witneſs with our ſpirits that we are the children of God*: then we are Chriſtians, not in name only, but in truth; then we do believe in the Holy Jeſus, and we ſhall *rejoice in the day of Chriſt that we have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

FINIS.